

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DACCA 02901 091403Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 EB-08 AID-05 HA-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00
OES-07 HEW-04 /118 W
-----050822 091411Z /43

R 090945Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9216
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY TKATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEPT PASS ALSO AID/ASIA AND AID/OFDA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR SREF BG BM
SUBJECT: ARAKAN MUSLIM REFUGEES

REFS: A. DACCA 2880(NOTAL); B. DACCA 2854(NOTAL);
C. DACCA 2761

1. SUMMARY: THE PRESS CONTINUES TO COVER THE REFUGEE ISSUE ON THE FRONT PAGE WITH INCREASINGLY HARROWING TALES OF ANGUISH. BDG APPEARS SET TO REQUEST FOREIGN VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ASSIST. SOME CONCERN IS BEING EXPRESSED THAT BANGLADESHIS MAY ATTEMPT TO

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TAKE REVENGE ON MAGHS RESIDENT IN THE COX'S BAZAR AREA AND ADJOINING PARTS OF THE HILL TRACTS. A MUSLIM GROUP ALLEGEDLY FROM ARAKAN HAS CIRCULATED TWO PAMPHLETS WHICH ATTACKS UOB AND APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE. PRESS ALSO REPORTS FROM MECCA THAT THE WORLD ISLAMIC LEAGUE HAS SUPPORTED BDG POSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. BOTH ENGLISH AND BENGALI LANGUAGES DAILIES AND A WIDE RANGE OF WEEKLIES HAVE CONTINUED TO PLAY STORIES ABOUT INFLUX OF REFUGEES FROM ARAKAN WITH NUMBERS NOW CLAIMED TO BE AS MUCH AS 100,000. THE REPORTS, OFTEN BASED ON NEWSMEN'S TRIPS TO THE AREA DESCRIBE CONDITIONS IN CAMPS WHICH ARE DEPOLARABLE, A SITUATION WHICH TALLIES WITH REPORTS WE HAVE HAD FROM A NUMBER OF NON-PRESS SOURCES (SEE REFS A AND B).

3. IN ADDITION TO HIS COMMENTS ON THE CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS (REFTEL A), UNDP DIRECTOR ZAGORIN (PLEASE PORTECT) TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE REFUGEES WERE IN A STATE OF SEVERE SHOCK AND APPEARED TO HAVE LEFT BURMA AS A RESULT OF A "MASS HYSTERIA" WHICH CAUSED VIRTUALLY WHOLE VILLAGES TO FLEE. SOME REFUGEES TOLD ZAGORIN THAT MALE FAMILY MEMBERS HAD BEEN "TAKEN AWAY" BY BURMESE AUTHROITIES AND THAT HAD HEARD ACCOUNTS OF BEATINGS AND RAPINGS IN OTHER AREAS AND THAT THEY HAD FLED IN FEAR. ZAGORIN EXPRESSED

CONCERN ABOUT THE POSSIBILE REPERCUSSIONS WITHIN BANGLADESH OF THE REFUGEE MIGRATION. HE SPECULATED REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY THAT MUSLIMS MIGHT RETALIATE AGAINST THE BUDDHIST MAGH RESIDENTS OF CHITTAGONG DISTRICT FOR THE ALLEGED WRONG-DOINGS OF THEIR FELLOW MAGH TRIBESMEN IN ARAKAN. ZAGORIN ALSO EXPRESSED UNEASINESS REGARDING THE PROBLEMS THE BDG MAY HAVE IN DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF

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MUSLIM MIGRATION IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

4. THE ROHINGYA PATRIOTIC FRONT OF ARAKAN HAS DSITRIBUTED WIDELY AMONG DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS HERE COPIES OF TWO PAMPHLETS WHICH SET FORTH MUSLIM POSITION AND DESCRIBE CLAIMED ATROCITIES AND MISDEEDS OF BURMESE GOVERNMENT. AGAIN LOCAL VILLAIN OF THE PIECE IS SEEN AS MAJOR KYAW MAUNG (SAW MRAA AUNG), MILITARY GOVERNOR OF ARAKAN AND SON-IN-LAW OF KYAW MRA CHOUDHURY OF TEKNAF. FRONT DENIES THAT "EXPELLEES" ARE FOEIGN AND CLAIMS ALL ARE BONA FIED RESIDENTS OF BURMA. COPIES ARE BEING POUCHED TO RANGOON AND DEPARTMENT (NEA/PAB).

5. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 6, FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN (WHO HAD BRIEFED THE AMBASSADOR PREVIOUS DAY - REFTEL B) SAID THAT ISSUE HAD CAUSED "A SITUATION OF GREAT STRAIN" BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND BURMA AND THAT "WE ARE KEEPING OUR FRIENDS OUTSIDE FULLY INFORMED". HE ADDED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONTINUING BUT THAT NO PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT BANGLADESH HAS ASKED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE TO MEET WITH THE SECRETARY FOR RELIEF AND REHABILITATION LATER

TODAY AND WILL SEND SEPTEL AS SOON AS WE HAVE A REPORT
ON THAT MEETING.)

5. PRESS ALSO REPORTS MAY 9 THAT THE WORLD ISLAMIC LEAGUE
BASED IN MECCA HAS SUPPORTED THE BANGLADESHI POSITION
AND HAS CALLED FOR SIMILAR SUPPORT FROM ISLAMIC COUNTRIES.
SCHNEIDER

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NNN

Message Attributes

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